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Annual ministerial review

Annual ministerial reviews for the high-level segments of the substantive sessions of 2010 and 2011 of the Economic and Social Council: selection of themes

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note is intended to facilitate consultations among Member States in the selection of themes for the annual ministerial reviews of the high-level segments of the substantive sessions of 2010 and 2011 of the Economic and Social Council. The following themes are recommended: "Promoting gender equality and empowering women: actions for the twenty-first century", for 2010; and "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education: defining the next steps", for 2011.

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Selection of themes for the 2010 and 2011 annual ministerial reviews

1. Pursuant to the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the General Assembly, in its resolution 61/16, decided that the Economic and Social Council should hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews as part of its high-level segments. The Assembly also decided that such reviews should be conducted by means of a cross-sectoral approach focusing on thematic issues common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals; should review progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of those conferences and summits and their follow-up processes; and should assess the impact of the reviews on the achievement of the goals and targets of the conferences and summits. In this regard, the Assembly recommended that the Council establish a multi-year programme of work for the annual ministerial reviews.

2. The establishment of the multi-year programme of work, in which the Council adopts at the same time the themes for two consecutive annual ministerial reviews, may be seen as an important step pursuant to the 2005 World Summit Outcome and General Assembly resolution 61/16. It facilitates preparations, the full engagement of the Council and the mobilization of the expertise required of Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders.

3. The Council may wish to continue the multi-year programme of work; to that end, elements for consideration and proposed themes are set out below.

A. Elements to be considered in selecting the themes

4. Since the 1990s, the major United Nations conferences and summits have covered a broad spectrum of development agenda in the economic, social and related fields and have generated unprecedented global consensus on development, including the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

5. The international community has recognized the linkages among the themes of those conferences and summits and among the internationally agreed development goals. Actions in certain critical areas are essential to the achievement of those goals, as defined in the Millennium Development Goals, the most visible and targeted expression of the internationally agreed development goals.

6. For the annual ministerial review, those critical areas for action have been and should remain the primary focus. While the multi-year programme of work can be built around those areas, there is also a need to examine them from the broader perspective of cross-cutting issues. For instance, in 2007, the theme of eradicating poverty and hunger was examined in the context of a global partnership for development.

7. In selecting themes for the 2010 and 2011 annual ministerial reviews, the Council may wish to take into account the themes examined since 2007:

2007
Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development

2008
Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development

2009
Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health

8. Since the half-way mark towards the target year of 2015 has already passed and the Council has chosen themes for the first three years of the annual ministerial review that are related to the Millennium Development Goals, the Council may also wish to consider addressing issues related to the other Millennium Development Goals at forthcoming annual ministerial reviews.

9. Finally, in its resolution 61/16, the General Assembly decided that the Economic and Social Council should continue to promote global dialogue, including through a thematic discussion on a theme from the economic, social and related fields to be decided by the Council and informed by a report of the Secretary-General. In taking a decision on the multi-year programme of work, the Council may also wish to consider the need for coherence between the themes of the annual ministerial review and the thematic discussion.

B. Proposal by the Secretary-General

10. In the light of the above-mentioned considerations, the following themes are recommended for the 2010 and 2011 annual ministerial reviews:

2010
Promoting gender equality and empowering women: actions for the twenty-first century

2011
Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education: defining the next steps

11. The proposed themes would ensure that the annual ministerial reviews follow up the 2005 World Summit Outcome, address the Millennium Development Goals and contribute towards efforts to integrate gender and education perspectives more effectively in global policies and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as in the follow-up processes to United Nations summits and conferences, in particular the 2005 Summit.

12. In respect of gender equality, the Millennium Declaration, endorsed by Governments worldwide in September 2000, recognizes that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are among the most effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. At the 2005 Summit, Governments reaffirmed their conviction that progress for women is progress for all.

13. At the 2010 annual ministerial review, to be convened in New York, where many of the gender-related organizations are based, the Council may wish to examine the progress made towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that promote gender equality; the gender dimensions of progress made towards achieving the other Millennium Development Goals; and future steps to be taken to close the gender gap. The year 2010 also marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

14. Education is also central to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Two of the eight Goals directly address education: Goal 2, on achieving universal primary completion, and Goal 3, target 4, on eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education. The goal of providing education for all is a pillar of United Nations conference and summit outcomes. The 2011 annual ministerial review, to be held in Geneva, will provide a platform to advance and assess progress towards fulfilling the international commitments in this area, in particular the implementation of the Education for All initiative, following the twentieth anniversary, in 2010, of the commitment to bring the benefits of education to every citizen in every society.